

Tramping Near By

By DOROTHY M. LATHROP.

JUST as the rose dawn was breaking we stole out—stole out is quite correct, because pedestrians in New England nowadays are practically unknown—out from New Canaan. The organist of St. Mark's, that quaint little roadside church at the top of the hill which always welcomes you, was at his keyboard, improvising on the pipe organ. It was a beneficent farewell, that musical reverie, for Mate and me, who were to walk through western Connecticut, in a countryside that rivals the English rural scenes.

Had it been proclaimed that we were about to set out on such a jaunt we should have been written down as eccentric; for, if you wish to be different from every person aroundabout these parts, go as we did on a pedestrian tour, just when Dame Nature has taken out her paint pot to daub the foliage here and there with reds and yellows and russets. Go without chart or compass, schedule or timetable, caring not whether you arrive in some particular place or anywhere at any particular hour of any particular day. If you be sporting enough to take a chance on obtaining bed and board accommodations, and just amble along, walking with exhilarating speed in the coolness of the morning, at other times stopping to peep into the beauty secrets and the little interests of the country neighborhoods, or to speak with the inhabitants along the way, having done this, Mate and I aver:

Walking through New England is one of the keenest delights within the limits of a modest purse, satisfying to any one who can appreciate the out of doors.

It was through a wealth of the most luxurious foliage that we wandered. The cardinal flower was abloom. Many kinds of goldenrod, late wild asters and innumerable other out of doors flowers added touches of beauty to the landscape. The robins, so the wayside farmers said, were preparing to fly southward soon as the season changes to late autumn. Also, said the bucolics, this southward flying will be earlier than usual, because the inordinately heavy rains presage a severe winter.

The route we followed took us to scenes of rural delight and into mountainous aspects, as we rose gradually en route to the Berkshires, where an elevation of more than 2,000 feet is attained in the northwestern corner of this, Litchfield, county, in Connecticut. We rambled along in localities of historic interest, now the abode of many country estate dwellers in what has become the playground of eastern America.

Clad in tramping togs, knapsacks packed with absolute necessities, we scorn the enervating motor cars and the looks of wonderment that any one in sane mind in these days should choose to walk when, apparently, every one else in the world is riding, gasoline propelled, over well built and well high dustless roadways.

Five miles to Vista and two miles further to Lewisboro, past the little country church and rectory, where, on the green, we obtain refreshment and renewed vigor from a thermos bottle and half a dozen sandwiches. A little more than two hours have gone, yet we have rediscovered New England, rediscovered that humans may walk, and that not all of life's delights are confined to whirling past country scenes in a furiously driven automobile.

Three miles beyond, after a rest at the Ridgefield Inn, we saw "The Cannon Ball House," reminder of Revolutionary times, when Gov. Tryon of New York invaded this region, pushed on to Danbury, ten miles further, destroyed the stores there of the Continental Army, retreated, and met defeat at Ridgefield by Gen. Wooster, who lost his life in the engagement. Ridgefield now has its wealthy summer colony.

So, over these historic highways we go to Danbury, that quaint town beloved by those who seek the antique in everything.



A Stream in the Connecticut Woods.

We have our midday dinner and a look around. Drab business thoughts were to be proscribed, yet one was given pause by the knowledge gained there that out of each hundred American men's hats that pass you on the streets sixteen of them come from that place, where the so-called "mad hatters of Danbury," in their industrial and legal controversies with their employers have been written into the jurisprudence of the nation as a cause celebre.

Throughout this region one runs across similar facts, demonstrative of the marvelous industrial efficiency of these Quaneh-ta-cut Yankees, aided by the lately come foreigners. But Mate commands to forget such things; so, willingly, we turn aside to seek out the White Turkey Inn, which you find on reaching the Town Green traveling from the south, by "going around the policeman to the left" and three miles out is the hostelry, famed, justly, for its tea, cinnamon, toast and jam.

Aroundabout Danbury, you may, by searching, as we did, find specimens of Colonial antique furniture to be had for not exorbitant prices. But to do so you shall have to go, as we did, out into the byways, away from the motorists' beaten paths. For it is not policy when seeking to obtain such articles to appear off the running board of a luxurious automobile. In such case, not strange to relate, these furniture antiques rise in value higher than ever a Berkshire peak attained.

That evening, as the shadows gathered, we sat in the great hall, soothing our sore muscles in the comforting warmth of the cheery logs, to hear tales of long ago; for Danbury was settled in 1684. The next morning Mate informed me he wished to resume the pilgrimage, having spent half the night fighting Indians and remaking genealogies; it was distressingly fatiguing work. We pay our bill, and our respects to the Soldiers' Monument, and are off on the State road, once more vagabonds, with the pure air of the mountains fairly threatening to burst our lungs. We halt at Lakeville to seek refreshments at the Wake Robin Inn, and stir again our Revolutionary memories, for there lived Ethan Allen on the shores of Lake Wonoskopomuc. We have climbed to 800 feet of altitude, and the glorious Berkshires are all round. The autumn paint pot here, too, has been used lavishly, to begin the transformation of the maples and the oaks and the birches into marvelously wrought color schemes.

Mate exclaims, breathlessly: "Oh, see that gorgeous branch!" and I asked that he search the lexicon for another adjective—that one having been elicited almost every moment as we passed the ever recurring changes of beauty.

One amusing experience we had—a farmer in a Ford stops, insists that we climb in, mutters something about "making that frail little woman walk," the while "the little woman" accepts, to save his feelings, and suppresses a smile at the absurdity of the idea.

So, here and there a vast estate, but tucked in between the pretty little all-the-year-round abodes of the Berkshire folk, hospitable, intelligent, and, of all things else, cleanly. Everywhere reasonable contentment, utter absence of concern, and absolute assurance that, "If Winter Comes" with coal shortage serious in other parts, they will have fuel aplenty—cordwood cut from the woodlots and forests, the thinning of which has been indorsed by the forestry authorities as not impinging on scientific forest preservation.

Another satisfying feature is the absence of the mosquito and other irritating insect pests, which had slightly lessened the enjoyment of earlier days in the countryside; for the pests disappear when the autumn colors come, a happy exchange, indeed.

One of the most charming villages to be found in America is Litchfield—so secluded, so quaint and so restful, amidst the wonderful hills, yet so important a place it holds in American history and literature. One naturally is most interested in learning that the old mansion house of Gov. Oliver Wolcott, erected in 1753, is to be found in old South street. It is the oldest in the community. Wolcott was one of the signers of the Declaration. It was here in Litchfield that the statue of George III. was melted into bullets for the Continental army. The house still belongs to the Wolcott family.

In Litchfield also was opened the first law college in America. From this school came five Cabinet Ministers, two Justices of the Supreme Court, ten Governors, sixteen United States Senators, fifty members of Congress, forty judges of the higher courts of the State, eight Chief Justices of the State—about 1,000 in all—to whom these Litchfielders "point with pride" in the brains trained here, Aaron Burr being one of the most celebrated; John C. Calhoun another.

So we divide our time between these famed treasured bits and the delightful Laercourt Lodge. We feel we know these townspeople intimately. They have been hospitable, considerate of two vagabonds of the road, two David Graysons faring aimlessly along on a land voyage of discovery. Strangers we were, and they "took us in." We are no longer "strangers in town." We shared the broiled chicken and aromatic, steaming coffee. We are shown the treasures in the attics and have made friends with the household cat. Frankly, we shall have to hire a motor truck to convey the collection Mate has had showered by friends and insistent dealers; for Mate has a weakness for these things old and musty, with a bit of romance about them. He puts life and energy into "roughing it," but loves to sit in cushioned ease betimes on Sheraton.

But as testimony of the vacation values found rationally, we appear ten years younger, and there is a spirit of gladness and a smile for these fascinating people. You find yourself beginning to understand

these "strange Quaneh-ta-cut Yankees," to whom our beloved Mark Twain introduced us in his far famed book.

Near here, in a modest mountain home, we pick up a copy of "The Knickerbocker History" to read what New Yorkers thought of these Yankees in earliest Colonial times. It appears that Adriaen Block, Dutchman from New Amsterdam, now yclept New York, cruised into the "Quaneh-ta-cut" River in his sixteen ton yacht Restless, finding there a village of the Sequin Indians, and organizing a Dutch company which for eighteen years monopolized traffic with the Quaneh-ta-cuts. Finally he yielded to the greater industry and keener trading abilities of the Yankees from Cambridge who came in the same year that Harvard College was founded—1632.

Who lives now in New York, if he adventure out this way pedestrianwise, and find fare among these folk as did we, will not indorse the description of the Connecticut Yankee which is in the Knickerbocker History, where they are alleged to have been "a squatting, building, guessing, questioning, swapping, pumpkin eating, molasses daubing, shingle splitting, cider watering, horse jockeying, notion peddling crew."

Contrawise, the New Yorker, sejourning among these kindly folk, will remember that these quiet, bucolic Connecticut scenes produced figures mighty in the development of the Republic—Roger Sherman, signer of the Declaration and drafter of the Constitution; Lyman Beecher, great theologian; Noah Webster, compiler of the Dictionary; Charles Goodyear, inventor of vulcanized rubber; Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, and also here was the occasion of that immortal exchange of bon mots in rime, when Sam C. Bushnell, Boston Yale alumnus, apropos Yale's motto, "Lux et Veritas," wrote:

"Here's to the City of Boston,

The home of the bean and the cod,
Where the Cabots speak only to Lowells,
And the Lowells walk with God."

And Dean Jones of Yale wrote back:

"Here's to the town of New Haven,
The home of the Truth and the Light,
Where God talks with Jones

In the very same tones

That He used with Hadley and Dwight."

The walking tour ended, accommodations at an inn procured the few remaining days of vacation time allocated to revelling in the wooded glories of the Connecticut Berkshires, the air tonic and becoming more so with each dawning morning, let it be recommended by us to all who reside in any city in eastern America:

Come up here, not in luxurious motor car, but on "shank's mare"; seek out in leisurely fashion the beauties of these regions; avoid those inns in which formalities obtain, where gossip spoils, where foolish rivalries in superficialities detract from genuine enjoyment, and here steep your souls in the restful, uplifting delights of a tramping tour among these Yankees in the Nutmeg State